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Fire victim recalled for helping veterans

By BRENT CURTIS
STAFF WRITER

A Clarendon man who died Monday after he was pulled from his burning house was remembered Tuesday for his work supporting his fellow Vietnam veterans.

Roy "Jake" Jacobsen, 68, was pronounced dead at Rutland Regional Medical Center from injuries that Vermont State Police said he suffered in a fire at his



Jacobsen

home at 186 Schoolhouse Hill Road.

Firefighters from three towns responded at about 4:20 p.m. Mon-

day to the blaze, which was doused before damage spread from a portion of the cellar and one upstairs

room, said Clarendon Fire Chief Norm Flanders.

But Jacobsen, who was found unconscious in an attached garage, died

despite the efforts of Regional Ambulance Service paramedics and Rutland County sheriff's deputies who tried to resuscitate him at the scene, according to sheriff's Deputy Joe Castle.

"Three of us worked on him until Regional arrived," Castle said.

No one else was injured in the fire, which left the house too damaged for occupation, Flanders said. The American Red Cross was called to assist Jacobsen's wife, Marilyn Jacobsen.

The Vietnam veteran's death was sad news to those who knew him.

"He was a great guy who was proud of his country, loved his family and was proud of his service," said fellow Vietnam vet Phil Savery. "He was just a good guy."

Savery and Jacobsen were both charter members of Vietnam Veterans of America — which formed its first chapter in

Rutland in 1980.

From its first chapter in Vermont, the VVA has added more than 600 chapters and 65,000 members throughout the United States and its territories, according to the organizations website.

For Jacobsen, who was among a core group of original members who got the organization off the ground in Rutland, the VVA's work was about restoring pride to veterans who returned from war to a country that was all too often indifferent to them.

"I was obsessed and I knew it," Jacobsen said in a 1988 interview. "I was obsessed that people weren't proud of servicemen and their country, about the bad things people said about vets, about their treatment. This country doesn't have enough medals to give to these people."

Veteran Larry Caruso said he met Jacobsen about a year after he said those words. As a

newcomer to Vermont, Caruso said some of his needs were practical — he was raising his children alone and Jacobsen came to his house a few times with items for his kids.

But it was the camaraderie, and support of having other Vietnam veterans to turn to, that set the group apart.

"Most Vietnam vets tend to internalize the war," Caruso said. "They don't want to talk about what happened to themselves. The VVA started in Rutland as a way for Vietnam veterans to support one another. We all went through similar things."

The VVA and Jacobsen also played key roles in opening the Dodge House — a transitional shelter for veterans who find themselves homeless.

Bob Rummel, who was long active in veteran affairs in Vermont, especially in establishing the

Dodge House, said Jacobsen played a big part in getting the project off the ground.

"Jake was running the Veterans Assistance Office in Rutland at that time and it was from that organization that the Dodge House purchased the building on Crescent Street ... for a buck," Rummel said. "He was on the ground before anyone else was, it seemed."

Dodge House director Christina Morgan said Jacobsen's efforts helped hundreds of veterans in the two decades since the shelter opened its doors.

"He played a huge part in the history of the Dodge House," Morgan said. "Jake talked about bringing home a sense of camaraderie that veterans shared. He definitely accomplished that here."

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Roy Jacobsen

CLARENDON — Roy "Jake" Jacobsen, 68, of Clarendon, passed away Monday, March 4, 2013, at Rutland Regional Medical Center.



Jake was born in Lakewood, N.J., February 27, 1945, to Roy and Mary (Landis) Jacobsen. In Jake's early years, he studied theology at Kings College in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. In 1968, he met the love of his life, Marilyn, and spent the next 43 years of his life with her.

Jake served our nation proudly as an air commando in the United States Air Force and was a veteran of the Vietnam War.

Upon returning home, Jake and his good friend, Don Bodette, founded the first chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America. The goal of the chapter was to provide services, programs and a sense of camaraderie amongst veterans. This successful endeavor served as a model to establish the nationwide program that continues to benefit veterans today.

Jake is survived by his wife, Marilyn (Chapman) Jacobsen of Clarendon; son Kyle R. Jacobsen and

his wife Natalynn of North Windham, Conn.; son Brian R. Jacobsen and his wife Erin of Dover, N.H.; and daughter Janine J. Lemieux and her husband Mark of Rutland, Vt.

Jake had a great love of family and especially enjoyed time with his four grandchildren, Morgan, Ryan, Kelsey and Jacob. Jake taught all who knew him to live a life of compassion, faithfulness and honor. He held a strong faith of life everlasting with the Lord and was a disciple to all who knew him. Jake truly never met a stranger; there was not a person in the room Jake would not meet, learn their life story and have them leave feeling better about themselves. Jake was the man that friends sought for a willing ear and honest, heartfelt advice.

The family welcomes all who knew him to celebrate Jake's life at 1 p.m. Sunday, March 24, at the new Armed Forces Reserve Training Center, 2143 Post Road, Rutland, VT 05701.

Arrangements are under the direction of Clifford Funeral Home in Rutland.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Wounded Warriors Project, PO Box 75817, Topeka, KS 66675.